It is further to be ensured that as a result of the opening of a new post office, the loss in respect of the parent post office does not increase beyond the permissible limit nor is its income reduced below the minimum prescribed.

(b) In Urban Areas:

In Urban areas, the post office should initially be self-supporting, and, at the time of the first annual review, it should show a 5% profit to be eligible for further retention.

The minimum distance between two post offices should be 1.5 Kms. in cities with a population of 20 lakhs and above, and 2 Kms. in other Urban Areas. No two delivery offices, however, should be closer than 5 Kms. from each other.

Heads of Circles have powers to relax the distance condition in 10% of the cases.

A Delivery Post Office in Urban Area should have a minimum of 7 Postmen's beats.

Benefit of I.T. to Rural Areas

†1460. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any scheme to formulate plan to provide benefit of information technology to rural areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are aware of the fact that because more than 90 per cent of population of the country is not conversant with English so they can be provided the benefit of information technology either in Hindi or other regional languages; and

(d) if so, keeping in view the above fact, what steps have been taken by Government for development, promotion and propagation of information technology through Hindi?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) Yes, Sir. The Department of Information Technology (DIT) through National Informatics Centre (NIC) provides NICNET backbone and e-governance support to both Central & State Govts. and UT administrations. The Land Records Computerization has been implemented in 3100 taluks in the country. NIC also provides necessary hardware at districts, application software in local languages & training to revenue officials. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) support has been provided to Ministry of Rural Development in Centre and States and to DRDAs; and software solutions have been developed such as Rural Soft 2000, Rural Bazar, Pria-Soft, eNRICH, etc. They have also developed AGMARKNET relevant to rural areas in the form of Agricultural Produce Markets Networking and Social Welfare Pension Computerization. During 2002-03 DIT had set up 487 Community Information Centres (CICs) in Block Headquarters of eight North Eastern States providing connectivity at grass-root level for socio-economic development of region. DIT has taken up setting up of 135 CICs in block headquarters in Jammu & Kashmir State which will provide a citizen interface for IT enabled e-government services and training.

As a part of e-Governance, DIT has initiated to roll out and horizontal transfer of land record project, namely Bhoomi, implemented successfully in the state of Karnataka, to other states in the country.

DIT had also set up Media Lab Asia (MLA) to innovate, research, develop and undertake pilot deployment of ICT and other technologies for the benefit of common man. MLA has identified rural connectivity, education, healthcare and empowerment of disabled persons as its thrust areas and has supported several projects in these areas for the benefit of rural and poor people and will address the grand challenges of poverty, literacy, education, health, employment, and micro-entrepreneurship.

The DIT had also established Four(4) Samadhan Kendras under a pilot scheme for the benefit of rural masses.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has linked its Research Institutes, State Agricultural Universities, Zonal Research Stations and selected Krishi Vigyan Kendras for E-mail, internet and dissemination of research information. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation has operationalised two schemes namely, National Agriculture Informatics Centre and Early Warning Information System and also strengthened the use of IT tools in the field offices and the Directorates.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Department of Information Technology through its Technology Development for Indian Languages (TDIL) program has set up 13 Resource Centres for Indian Languages Technology solutions covering all Indian languages. Information processing tools and technologies for Indian languages have been developed.

NIC has also been carrying out computerization in the local languages as per State Govts. requirement.

Cellular Service in Kerala

1461. SHRI ABDUL WAHAB PEEVEE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Cellular services are being provided throughout India including Kerala;

(b) if not, the places where this service is not available at present; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to provide satisfactory service at par with other services being provided by private cell operators?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir. Licences have been issued to various operators including PSUs to provide mobile services throughout India. As per licence agreement they are to provide mobile services in 50% of the district headquarters or any other town in lieu of District Headquarter within three years of the effective date of licence.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) The quality of mobile service provided by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) in Kerala is generally meeting the various benchmarks set by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) except for call success rate which is mainly due to limitations of network capacity. BSNL is in the process of enhancing the capacity of the mobile network to resolve this issue and further the network is being optimized to its performance continuously.